

報告

The 4th TOEIC Speaking & Writing Test at Morioka Junior College:
Test Preparation and Results

第4回盛岡短期大学部における TOEIC Speaking & Writing Test の試験対策と結果

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マーハー・パトリック**Keywords:** *TOEIC Speaking & Writing Test, business English, strategic competence*
TOEIC スピーキング・ライティング試験, ビジネス英語, 方略的言語能力

1. Background

The Morioka Junior College Department of International Cultural Studies initially offered second year students the opportunity to sign up and prepare for the TOEIC Speaking & Writing Test at the beginning of the fall semester in 2016, with the administration of the first Test taking place in February 2017. Since this inaugural non-credit bearing trial run, the Test has been offered once to each successive group of second year students as the capstone challenge to an elective course (Business English), with tests having taken place during the final exam period in February 2018, August 2018, and most recently August 2019.

This report will focus primarily on outlining certain test preparation strategies and analyzing results for this latest 4th examination, and while recent Test format changes and prior test groups' results will additionally receive some mention, it is recommended that readers unfamiliar with the TOEIC Speaking & Writing Test – as well as those looking for a more in-depth introduction to and analysis of the prior three Tests given at Morioka Junior College – first read last year's 2019 report: Building Fluency and Flexibility with the TOEIC Speaking & Writing Test (Maher, 2019). Scan the QR code below for quick access to the aforementioned report.

Building Fluency and Flexibility with the TOEIC Speaking & Writing Test
(TOEIC Speaking & Writing Test を通じての流暢さと適応性の向上)



2. Test Changes in 2019

The TOEIC Speaking & Writing Test has continued to attract a greater number of challengers with each passing year since its inception in 2006, with 39,300 test takers throughout Japan in fiscal year 2018 (IIBC, 2019a). Of this total, 14,300 individuals took the Secure Program

(SP) Test and 25,000 individuals took the Institutional Program (IP) Test. The SP Test, or the version directly administered by the Institute for International Business Communication (IIBC), is offered a select number of times per year at designated testing centers ranging from Hokkaido to Okinawa. Unfortunately, while interested parties living in areas akin to central Honshu have a monthly opportunity to sign up for an SP Test held at any of a variety of testing centers scattered throughout larger urban areas (e.g. Tokyo and Saitama), those living in the Tohoku Region – and furthermore not wishing to spend more money in transportation costs than test fees – are limited to a more-often-than-not bimonthly opportunity offered only at a lone testing center in Sendai, Miyagi Prefecture (IIBC, 2020a). Arguably the greatest drawback to such isolation lies in the fact that the only way to receive an official score certificate – as opposed to a generally equivalent yet somewhat less prestigious score report – is to take the SP Test at a designated venue.

However, pessimism aside, as more and more students, company employees, and organizational members have registered to take the TOEIC Speaking & Writing Test, the number and distribution of designated testing centers has also seen growth. Perhaps, in time, the Tohoku Region – and some of its more sparsely populated prefectures like Iwate – could find itself better served in this regard, too. Until that time, the Institutional Program (IP) Test not only exists as a secondary option, but in many respects proves a more attractive choice for several schools and corporations looking to adopt a well-respected productive skills proficiency assessment into their curriculum or hiring process. For Morioka Junior College, the freedom and flexibility to decide the place and time of the exam before then having boxes of computers and accompanying testing materials sent directly to the school is why (and when looking to pacify bureaucratic inflexibility oft dismissive of new ventures, perhaps the primary reason why) time-strapped students battling heavy schedules and nearing graduation can even consider entertaining the opportunity to attempt this test.

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<i>Task</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>+Skills</i>
Read a text aloud (2 questions)	<u>45 sec. each</u> (Prep: 30 sec.) (Prep: 45 sec.)	Reading
Describe a picture (1 question)	<u>45 sec.</u> (Prep: 30 sec.)	
Respond to questions (3 questions)	<u>15-30 sec. each</u> (Prep: none) (Question set prep: none) (Prep after each question is read: none)	Listening and/or reading ⁽¹⁾
Respond to questions using information provided (3 questions)	<u>15-30 sec. each</u> (Prep: none) (Question set prep: 30 sec.) (Prep after each question is read: none)	Listening & reading
Propose a solution (1 question)	<u>60 sec.</u> (Prep: 30 sec.)	Listening
Express an opinion (1 question)	<u>60 sec.</u> (Prep: 15 sec.)	Listening and/or reading ⁽¹⁾

(Table 1.1) An outline of the TOEIC Speaking Test tasks and the time allotted per task prior to June 1, 2019; the total test time is 20 minutes to answer 11 questions. ~~Crossed-out text~~ represents incorrect/unclear information from a previous report (Maher, 2019). Corrections made **in black**. ⁽¹⁾Questions in this section are read aloud while shown on the screen; thus, students could answer these questions correctly by just listening, just reading, or both.

<i>Task</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>+Skills</i>
Write a sentence based on a picture (5 questions)	8 min. total	Typing
Respond to a written request (2 questions)	10 min. each	Reading & typing
Write an opinion essay (1 question)	30 min.	Reading & typing

(Table 2.1) An outline of the TOEIC Writing Test tasks and the time allotted per task prior to June 1, 2019; the total test time is 60 minutes to answer 8 questions.

Scan the QR code below for quick access to a sample version of the TOEIC Speaking & Writing Test. You can also preview the test by visiting:
<https://www.iibc-global.org/toEIC/test/sw/about/format/sampletest.html>
(IIBC, 2020b)



<i>Task</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>+Skills</i>
Read a text aloud (2 questions)	<u>45 sec. each</u> (Prep: 45 sec.)	Reading
Describe a picture (1 question)	<u>45 sec.</u> (Prep: 45 sec.)	
Respond to questions (3 questions)	<u>15-30 sec. each</u> (Question set prep: none) (Prep after each question is read: 3 sec.)	Listening and/or reading ⁽¹⁾
Respond to questions using information provided (3 questions)	<u>15-30 sec. each</u> (Question set prep: 30 sec.) (Prep after each question is read: 3 sec.)	Listening & reading
Propose a solution (1 question)	<u>60 sec.</u> (Prep: 45 sec.)	Listening
Express an opinion (1 question)	<u>60 sec.</u> (Prep: 30 sec.)	Listening and/or reading ⁽¹⁾

Note-taking & outlining⁽²⁾

(Table 1.2) An altered outline of the TOEIC Speaking Test tasks and the time allotted per task as of June 1, 2019; the total test time remains mostly unchanged. Changes made to the test are **highlighted in gray** (Educational Testing Service, 2019).

⁽¹⁾See the explanation in Table 1.1. ⁽²⁾These skills are applicable to the TOEIC Speaking & Writing Test in its entirety.

<i>Task</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>+Skills</i>
Write a sentence based on a picture (5 questions)	8 min. total	Typing
Respond to a written request (2 questions)	10 min. each	Reading & typing
Write an opinion essay (1 question)	30 min.	Reading & typing

Note-taking & outlining⁽²⁾

(Table 2.2) An outline of the TOEIC Writing Test tasks and the time allotted per task as of June 1, 2019; the total test time remains 60 minutes to answer 8 questions. Changes made to the test are **highlighted in gray** (Educational Testing Service, 2019). ⁽²⁾ See the explanation above in Table 1.2.

Also with an increase in test takers comes a richer pool of participant feedback and data from which to assess possible shortcomings and potential innovations. In this vein, 2019 brought two significant changes in relation to the TOEIC Speaking & Writing Test: format and policy alternations to the Test itself, as well as the beginning of a TOEIC Bridge version of the Speaking & Writing Test.

First, since around the turn of the millennium, the TOEIC Bridge Listening & Reading Test, a more condensed and basic-to-intermediate-level focused version of the company's flagship TOEIC Listening & Reading Test, has served a comparatively niche community of lower-level English language learners. Looking to offer this same audience a more beginner-to-intermediate friendly version of their productive skills exam, the TOEIC Bridge Speaking & Writing Test appears with a format sporting a mix of similarities and differences. While this test may too someday play a valuable role in the Morioka Junior College language curriculum, as of the writing of this report, there has been no adoption or proposal for the implementation of said test, and thus, there will be no more focus on the TOEIC Bridge Speaking & Writing Test here. However, for those interested, scan the QR code below for quick access to a sample version:

Sample questions for the TOEIC Bridge Speaking & Writing Test.

You can also preview the test by visiting the following site:

https://www.iibc-global.org/toEIC/test/bridge_sw/about/format/sample01.html

(IIBC, 2020c)



Shifting focus to format and policy changes, the preceding page (ETS, 2019; IIBC, 2020a) outlines the alternations made to the TOEIC Speaking & Writing Test that took effect on June 1, 2019. Table 1.1 and Table 1.2 cover the Speaking Test, while Table 2.1 and Table 2.2 cover the Writing Test.

The TOEIC Speaking Test has undergone a number of cosmetically minor yet practically consequential changes in regards to preparation and thinking time. Most notably stands the change from absolutely no pause for thought between question and answer for questions 4-9: the middle two sections, each of which are comprised of three questions related to a particular overarching situation or theme. The seemingly subtle addition of three seconds between each question and answer here to gather one's thoughts met with great fanfare from Morioka Junior College students, a reaction surely not unique within the test taking community. Personally, wagering that the majority of professional,

polite, or customer service-related conversations would at times have slight pauses or lags between, say, one speaker finishing a question and the other beginning their answer, it could be said that this change perhaps reflects a more realistic timeframe for responding to queries. Additionally, other sections of the Speaking Test received 15-second extensions in preparation time, which – for better or for worse depending on one's preference for how challenging a test of this nature should in fact prove – works well hand in hand with the most impactful recent change to both the Speaking Test and the Writing Test on the whole: note-taking.

Up until June 2019, students interacted solely with a computer – listening through the headset, speaking into the microphone, navigating with the mouse, and typing on the keyboard – with any scratch paper or writing utensils strictly prohibited. What exactly triggered the policy change allowing for note-taking (be it limited to TOEIC issued paper and pencils that are collected by the proctor upon completion of the examination; a fair bargain, this author would argue) goes unsaid in the policy change notice (ETS, 2019); however, similar to the three-second gap introduced between many Speaking Test questions and answers, taking notes while listening again feels more authentic with considering the realities of the professional situations imagined in the TOEIC Speaking & Writing Test, and serves as a welcome addition.

Regardless of the reason, the ban on note-taking has been lifted, both better reflecting the realities of the professional world that the Test strives to recreate, as well as opening up new avenues for teaching strategic competence with regards to note-taking and outline methodology (e.g. professional interpreter note-taking strategies for cleanly ordering rapidly incoming pieces of information).

3. Student Recruitment and Test Preparation

Despite the previously discussed changes for the better, however, Morioka Junior College did not become aware of said updates until well into July of 2019. While this left more than enough time to inform students of the new format and their expanded privileges, the semester's imminent end meant that practically no classroom time whatsoever could be allocated to note-taking strategies and the like. That said, the test preparation regiment interwoven into the curriculum for the 15-week elective course Business English nonetheless took additional steps towards evolving into a higher quality, better focused plan for improving the linguistic, cultural, and strategic proficiencies of enrolled students. Furthermore, boosting confidence and naturalizing fluency (two matters of inarguable importance for a test such as the TOEIC Speaking & Writing Test) through helping students learn to coexist more comfortably with conversational ambiguity exerted a core influence on both lesson planning and classroom culture.

Recruitment for the August 2019 test group (the 4th group to take the TOEIC Speaking & Writing Test at Morioka Junior College) followed mostly the same procedure as with the previous two groups. In April,

during an orientation session for second year students held at the beginning of the academic year and before the start of classes, students learned of the opportunity to take the TOEIC Speaking & Writing Test free of charge (i.e. Morioka Junior College would cover the test fee) assuming they met the following criteria: 1. Students must have met the WordEngine (Lexxica, 2019) correct response goal for the year as a first student and/or earned a B-grade or higher in all first year mandatory English classes; 2. Sign up for the elective course Business English and agree to follow the (more stringent than usual) class terms regarding effort and attendance; 3. Complete all assignments for said course. Initially, 21 Morioka Junior College students signed up for the class, with four students dropping the class of their own accord within the first month, and one student being “fired” (as Business English regularly incorporates business lingo) towards the end of the semester for lackluster effort and failure to complete course assignments.

In addition to these Junior College students, however, was another individual: a third year student from the Department of Social Welfare (also a part of Iwate Prefectural University). Having just returned from an 11-month study abroad in the United States and looking for academic outlets to continue studying English (where unfortunately students in four-year Departments at Iwate Prefectural University have no credit-bearing options available to them following the completion of their second year), said student inquired about the possibility of joining Business English – a class which, up until academic year 2019, had been closed off to such students. Said student received permission and served as an outstanding role model for other students. Thus, a total of 17 students ended up taking the Test in August 2019.

Classroom test preparation itself, of course, involved tackling numerous practice questions and mock exams taken from published test prep materials for the TOEIC Speaking & Writing Test, together with intensive focus on specific recurring business-related vocabulary words and phrases and extensive writing practice done mostly outside of class, leading to the ultimate creation of a writing portfolio. However, for the purposes of this report, the remainder of focus on test preparation will be limited to the matter of bite-sized strategic competence “mantras” verbalized repeatedly by the teacher throughout the semester for the dual purpose of helping students to remember particularly important strategic approaches to take in answering a question and/or the type of content often under scrutiny in certain sections of the test. Table 3.1 below lays out many of these mantras.

The Golden Mantra of “It’s all money and people” more than likely receives the most repetition, given its aim to promote flexibility and fluency in students, the vast majority of whom have little to no corporate or professional experience, let alone such experience in an English or international setting. Thus, as the Test demands imagining the likes of what you would do as a member of a company committee, or how you would interest a potential client, or how to solve a budgetary issue, etc., “It’s all money and people” reminds students that

company committee member or student in a class, prospective client or potential weekend date, large corporate budget or smaller club budget, the problems and responsibilities for a student in a university setting are, at heart, not all that alien from those of a worker in a company: they revolve around the movement of money and human relationships. Tell yourself, “It’s all money and people,” strip the situation down to its skeleton, and reassess the issue from a less jargon-cluttered perspective.

Section	Mantra	Intention
All: <i>Golden Mantra</i>	<i>It's all money and people</i>	Think of business settings in terms you can relate to on a more personal level
<u>Speaking</u> Q. 1-2	<i>1, 2, 3 = Do-re-mi</i>	Lists of three always appear in these questions, so remember rhythmic intonation
<u>Speaking</u> Q. 3	<i>Big to small, above and below</i>	Describe the big picture before moving on to the details, and use prepositions of location to zero in on those details
<u>Speaking</u> Q. 4-6	<i>You can fly if you lie</i>	Open questions like these do not require you to answer truthfully, so run with whatever comes to mind first
<u>Speaking</u> Q. 7-9	<i>When and where, tricky then many</i>	Typically, Q. 7 is a simple WH-question (often When? Or Where?), Q. 8 is a trickier tag question, and Q. 9 asks for multiple pieces of information
<u>Speaking</u> Q. 10	<i>Puzzle Pieces</i>	Build a realistic sounding reply with the keywords you caught
<u>Speaking</u> Q. 11	<i>Be clear, 2 reasons, be clear again</i>	Begin by clearly giving your opinion, aim for no more than two supporting arguments, and end by restating your opinion
<u>Writing</u> Q. 1-5	<i>1 or 2? There is or I-N-G</i>	Singular/plural mistakes are the most common, and most sentences should begin with either “There is/are...” or include “...is/are VERB-ing”
<u>Writing</u> Q. 6-7	<i>21st century service</i>	Could the functionality of your phone help with the issue being addressed in the question?
<u>Writing</u> Q. 8	<i>Be clear, 3 reasons, everything again</i>	Begin by clearly giving your opinion, aim for about three supporting arguments, and end by summarizing it all

(Table 3.1) Business English Strategic Competence Mantras

Given the quick pace of the TOEIC Speaking & Writing Test, (admittedly anecdotal evidence and quite possibly a case of correlation casting itself as causation though the following claim may be) it would seem that having a mental map of the test's flow, together with a – in this case – mantra-induced flowchart of conscious and/or unconscious cues to assuage cognitive fatigue and allow for greater focus on question content has – or so the following results might lead one to argue – had a positive effect on student performance and confidence. At the very least, students themselves have responded positively to such classroom attention to strategic preparation, and so such preparation will continue to receive fine tuning and continued application within future classes.

4. Test Results and Analysis

<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Average Speaking Score</i>	<i>Average Writing Score</i>
University Students 大学生	97.6	119.7
New Employees 新入社員	112.1	135.6
Employees working in International Divisions 海外部門	127.2	148.2
	<i>Score</i>	<i>Score</i>
Level to qualify for Overseas Business Trips 海外出張レベル	130+	140+
Level to qualify for Overseas Postings 海外赴任レベル	160+	170+

(Table 4.1) TOEIC Speaking and Writing Test average scores across the entirety of Japan for fiscal year 2016 and recommended minimum scores for participation in overseas business activities (IIBC, 2015, 2017).

With the aim of setting some sort of benchmark for analyzing how positively or negatively to measure the scores of past Morioka Junior College test groups, the information in Table 4.1 has thus far proved quite useful. The bottom two rows in particular have worked as a foundation for helping teachers and students alike appreciate a score's value. However, in combing through the most recent collection of annual data analyses and promotional materials for the TOEIC Speaking & Writing Test, it would appear that either IIBC no longer believes that these levels serve as an accurate standard of measurement,

IIBC still stands behind these level markers but has for one reason or another chosen not to reprint them recently, or this report's author has (despite an extensive search) glossed over any and all printings more recent than 2015 of these business activity benchmarks (IIBC, 2015).

Regardless, in analyzing the 4th student group's data, the same standards used with the past three groups (i.e. a score of 130+ on the Speaking Test and/or a score of 140+ on the Writing Test) were relied on in highlighting scores notably worthy of praise.

Table 5.1 through Table 5.4 on the following page offer a breakdown of the August 2019 test takers' scores, and Table 6.1 through Table 6.6 dive further into comparing scores from all four test groups, as well as looking at how Morioka Junior College student scores stand up against the latest TOEIC Speaking & Writing Test average scores nationwide. Outstanding scores – which will be defined for the purposes of this report the same as they were in the previous report (Maher, 2019) as scores that enter into the level of qualifying for overseas business trips – are highlighted in gray in Table 5.1 through Table 6.3. While the charts more or less speak for themselves, this section will conclude by pointing out some of the more significant results from the data analysis.

First and foremost, overall results once again demonstrate that Morioka Junior College students are more than capable of praiseworthy performances on this considerably challenging test. This year's average speaking score of 117.5 is not only the highest average score of any Junior College group yet, but moreover surpasses the national average IP Test speaking score by a significant margin. The same goes for the 4th group's average writing score of 136.3, which while not the highest average score ever seen at Morioka Junior College (but also not far off at 2.3 points behind), here too the overall average IP Test writing score is lower.

25% (4 out of 16) of Morioka Junior College students got 130+ points on the Speaking Test, and a whopping 63% (10 out of 16) got 140+ points on the Writing Test; the latter proves a new Junior College record.

As for a few individual performances of note, first there is student Y4-6, who with a speaking score of 150 points eclipses the previously held Junior College high score of 140 points. Additionally, student Y4-6's combined speaking and writing score of 310 points also sets a new internal record. Students Y4-4 and Y4-9, each with combined scores of 280 points, also deserve mentioned among the Junior College elite: of the total 53 Morioka Junior College students to take the TOEIC Speaking & Writing Test to date, only 7 students (including those three from this year) have gotten a combined score of at least 280 points.

Finally, some words about student Y4-12, the Iwate Prefectural University student from a four-year department. Unsurprisingly, given the student's recent extended experience abroad, this student's numbers shine; the speaking score of 160 points and the writing score of 180 points both land in the level to qualify for overseas business postings, a feat which no Morioka Junior College student has yet to achieve on the

<i>Student</i>	<i>Speaking Score</i>	<i>Proficiency Level</i>
Y4-1	120	5
Y4-2	100	4
Y4-3	90	4
Y4-4	140	6
Y4-5	130	6
Y4-6	150	6
Y4-7	110	5
Y4-8	110	5
Y4-9	130	6
Y4-10	120	5
Y4-11	120	5
*Y4-12	160	7
Y4-13	110	5
Y4-14	110	5
Y4-15	120	5
Y4-16	100	4
Y4-17	120	5
Morioka Junior College Average = 117.5		
Overall Average = 120.0		

(Table 5.1) Speaking scores & proficiency levels for Aug. 2019.

* Denotes a 4-year university student

<i>Student</i>	<i>Writing Score</i>	<i>Proficiency Level</i>
Y4-1	140	7
Y4-2	120	6
Y4-3	110	6
Y4-4	140	7
Y4-5	140	7
Y4-6	160	7
Y4-7	140	7
Y4-8	150	7
Y4-9	150	7
Y4-10	130	6
Y4-11	150	7
*Y4-12	180	8
Y4-13	130	6
Y4-14	130	6
Y4-15	150	7
Y4-16	100	5
Y4-17	140	7
Morioka Junior College Average = 136.3		
Overall Average = 138.8		

(Table 5.3) Writing scores & proficiency levels for Aug. 2019.

* Denotes a 4-year university student

<i>Student</i>	<i>Pronunciation</i>	<i>Intonation & Stress</i>
Y4-1	2	2
Y4-2	2	1
Y4-3	1	1
Y4-4	2	2
Y4-5	2	2
Y4-6	3	2
Y4-7	2	2
Y4-8	2	2
Y4-9	2	2
Y4-10	2	2
Y4-11	2	2
*Y4-12	3	3
Y4-13	2	2
Y4-14	2	2
Y4-15	2	2
Y4-16	2	2
Y4-17	2	2

(Table 5.2) Pronunciation & intonation/stress scores for Aug. 2019.

* Denotes a 4-year university student

<i>Student</i>	<i>Speaking + Writing</i>	<i>Rank</i>
*Y4-12	340	** (1)
Y4-6	310	1 (2)
Y4-4	280	2 (3)
Y4-9	280	
Y4-5	270	3 (4)
Y4-11	270	
Y4-15	270	
Y4-1	260	4 (5)
Y4-8	260	
Y4-17	260	
Y4-7	250	5 (6)
Y4-10	250	
Y4-13	240	6 (7)
Y4-14	240	
Y4-2	220	7 (8)
Y4-3	200	8 (9)
Y4-16	200	

(Table 5.4) Rank of overall student scores for Aug. 2019.

* Denotes a 4-year university student

** Rankings in parentheses include 4-year university student

<i>Student</i>	<i>Speaking + Writing</i>	<i>Rank</i>
Y1-2	300	1
Y1-1	290	2
Y1-5	260	3
Y1-4	250	4
Y1-3	240	5
Y1-6	240	
Y1-7	230	6
Y1-8	220	7
Y1-9	180	8

(Table 6.1) Ranking of overall student scores for Feb. 2017.

<i>Student</i>	<i>Speaking + Writing</i>	<i>Rank</i>
Y2-5	270	1
Y2-2	250	2
Y2-9	250	
Y2-6	240	3
Y2-1	230	4
Y2-3	230	
Y2-4	230	
Y2-7	230	
Y2-8	220	5

(Table 6.2) Ranking of overall student scores for Feb. 2018.

<i>Student</i>	<i>Speaking + Writing</i>	<i>Rank</i>
Y3-12	300	1
Y3-5	280	2
Y3-3	270	3
Y3-6	270	
Y3-15	270	
Y3-18	270	
Y3-8	260	4
Y3-11	260	
Y3-1	250	5
Y3-2	250	
Y3-16	250	
Y3-17	250	
Y3-4	240	6
Y3-10	240	
Y3-9	230	7
Y3-13	230	
Y3-14	220	8
Y3-19	220	
Y3-7	210	9

(Table 6.3) Rank of overall student scores for Aug. 2018.

<i>Testing Year</i>	<i>Average Speaking Score</i>	<i>Average Writing Score</i>
Feb. 2017; 9 students	110.0	135.6
Feb. 2018; 9 students	100.0	138.9
Aug. 2018; 19 students	114.8	136.3
Aug. 2019; 16 students (MJC students only)	117.5	136.3
Aug. 2019; 17 students (MJC + 4-year student)	120.0	138.8

(Table 6.4) Average speaking and writing scores for all groups.

<i>Testing Year</i>	<i>130+ points on Speaking Test</i>	<i>140+ points on Writing Test</i>
Feb. 2017; 9 students	2 students; (22%)	4 students; (44%)
Feb. 2018; 9 students	0 students; (0%)	5 students; (55%)
Aug. 2018; 19 students	5 students; (26%)	8 students; (42%)
Aug. 2019; 16 students (MJC students only)	4 students (25%)	10 students (63%)
Aug. 2019; 17 students (MJC + 4-year student)	5 students (29%)	11 students (65%)

(Table 6.5) Number and percentage of students from each group who scored the minimum recommended speaking and writing score for qualification to participate in overseas business trips (based on previously published recommendations).

<i>Testing Group (IP Test)</i>	<i>Average Speaking Score</i>	<i>Average Writing Score</i>
Schools 学校	96.9	112.4
Companies & Organizations 企業・団体	110.1	135.2
Overall 全体	103.8	122.8
<i>Testing Group (SP Test)</i>	<i>Average Speaking Score</i>	<i>Average Writing Score</i>
Students 学生	120.3	136.9
Adults 社会人	126.3	146.8
Overall 全体	123.7	142.2

(Table 6.6) TOEIC Speaking and Writing Test average scores across the entirety of Japan for fiscal year 2018 (IIBC, 2019a). All four Morioka Junior College test groups have taken the IP Test.

speaking portion of the test, and only one student (Y1-2) has ever achieved on the writing portion of the test, with a score of 170 points. Impressive though student Y4-12's scores are, personally the gap of only 10 points between Y4-12's speaking score of 160 points and this year's Junior College high score of 150 points comes as a bit of a surprise. Upon further investigation into TOEIC's published data (IIBC, 2019a), a mere 856 of the total 24,868 IP Speaking Test takers (or a mere 2%) managed an "overseas posting" level speaking score of 160 points or higher. This compared to 989 of the 17,432 total IP Writing Test takers (or 5.7%) who managed a score of 170 points, qualifying for the same level. Whether this paltry showing among IP Speaking Test takers is a matter of rather high standards on the part of those grading the exams, a lacking in more advanced-level speaking skills among the IP Speaking Test taking body, a combination of such factors or reasons otherwise, stands a potentially important topic of future attention, especially if aiming to one day get Morioka Junior College students over this now elevated 150 point high bar.

5. Moving Forward

Looking towards the 5th TOEIC Speaking & Writing Test at Morioka Junior College scheduled for August 2020, results would indicate the moving forward on the same track with regards to classroom preparation and the like should yield positive results. That said, being a productive skills test as it is, the more opportunities not only to practice speaking and writing, but the more changes for direct, focused feedback that students can receive from teachers and tutors, the better. Time restraints and personnel issues of course force one to set realistic limits in pondering this matter; however, the upcoming addition of a second full-time native English speaker to the Morioka Junior College Department of International Cultural Studies' faculty means a more flexible outlook and a fresher perspective in realistically reassessing and reimagining the Department's English curriculum, not least of which includes the scope of the Business English curriculum.

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